



ILO Global Jobs Pact: Putting Jobs And Decent Work At The Heart Of Recovery



By
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In June 2009, the tripartite International Labour Conference adopted the Global Jobs Pact to address the social and economic impact of the crisis. The biggest concern among many was the lag in time between economic recovery and job recovery or, worse still, years of jobless growth.

So, the Pact stresses on the need to ensure that growth not only results in new investments but is also centred on job creation and social protection. A wage survey conducted by the International Labour Organization also showed that in a majority of the countries, including Singapore, real wages had either stagnated or fallen in 2008 with the onset of the crisis. There was also very weak social protection

as many countries do not have social safety nets to support workers who lost their jobs thus seriously pushing back the UN Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015.

But there were also some silver linings. At the ILO Governing Body meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, in November 2009, The Brazilian Bolsa Familia was cited as one good example of a successful social transfer scheme where families are given cash support so long as they make sure that their children attend school. Another example was the Indian work guarantee programme which provides a job for at least 100 days usually through government projects.

Singapore's speedy tripartite response to the crisis also gained some recognition from the ILO and other unionists.

One casualty of the crisis was social dialogue which had worsened in many countries. The social partnership in Ireland, which was the ILO's poster boy of European social dialogue for years, had virtually collapsed over job losses and wage cuts as the unions

start preparing for a long winter of discontent.

Singapore's social dialogue on the other hand strengthened, benefitting our workers as job losses were reduced and retrenched workers were assisted with very proactive labour market programmes. Our re-skilling and retraining programme was also cited as an example of how we have helped workers to weather the storm and prepare for the upturn.

However, one trend observed in other countries which is also discernible here is the increase in part-time and short-term work with low wages and poorer conditions of work. According to a Ministry of Manpower survey, it has increased to 12 per cent. This is partly due to the downturn as employers are less willing to create permanent jobs but it also shows that the stress in the ILO Jobs Pact on the importance of creating decent jobs remain critical. The ILO had more than a decade enjoined decent work covering job creation, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue as the truly sustainable way forward for inclusive growth.

Ideas Shared At ASEAN Tripartite Meet

By
Marcus Lin

Tripartite delegations from ten ASEAN countries learned how Singapore's tripartite partners quickly implemented measures like the Tripartite Guidelines on Managing Excess Manpower and the Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience to deal with the past year's economic downturn.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Manpower and Health Hawazi Daipi told the 40 delegates that Singapore's model of tripartite collaboration and the downturn measures worked because "the trust, common understanding and shared purpose built over the decades enabled us to address the crisis with a united front. Singapore's tripartism has been further strengthened as a result of the downturn."

Mr Hawazi was speaking at the 'ASEAN Seminar On Tripartism And Social Dialogue And Measures To Address The Economic Downturn' held on 30 November and 1 December 2009 at NTUC Centre. It was co-hosted by the Ministry of Manpower, the Singapore National Employers Federation and the National Trades Union Congress as part of the Singapore Tripartism Forum.

He gave figures: "As of end October, about 244,000 workers have signed up to upgrade themselves through SPUR. Of these, almost 153,000 workers have already commenced or completed training. About two-thirds or 163,000 of the committed numbers are workers sent for training by 3,400 companies."

Coming after Singapore last year held the



ASEAN HR Summit and a study of the impact of ASEAN integration on labour markets in ASEAN, seminar participants shared on measures addressing labour issues from the economic downturn and the tripartite partners' roles. Representatives from the International Labour Organization and the ASEAN Secretariat also took part.

Mr Hawazi said that "tripartism and social dialogue have been key factors in enabling ASEAN countries to address the downturn," and it is therefore important to sustain, institutionalise and build on it with vehicles like the Singapore Tripartism Forum. He added that collaborative projects to enhance labour practices including the ASEAN HR Conference, social security, industrial relations, skills development and networking, skills recognition, labour law, labour statistics, decent work and corporate social responsibility are all on track.

Delegate Cyrille Tan, who is a NTUC Central Committee Vice-President and the United Workers of Electronic and Electrical Industries General Secretary, said: "The

seminar made delegates realise the importance of tripartism, especially in managing this very severe economic downturn. Many want to emulate the trust and close bonding between the tripartite partners here built up over the years because it is not the same in their countries."

Said Food, Drinks and Allied Workers' Union General Secretary and NTUC Central Committee member Tan Hock Soon: "It is a good time for the participants from ASEAN to share strategies and co-operation. Though there is tripartism in their countries and the plans and objectives appear similar, the difference is in the implementation and the results."

SNEF Assistant Executive Director Stephen Yee felt the seminar "provided a good opportunity for us to learn and share the different measures adopted by each respective government, employer organisations and trade unions in managing the economic downturn. The exchange of ideas and engagements among the ASEAN delegates were remarkable."